





















































If I had to say which were my favorite photos from my time living in China. I would have to say these two brothers?

Who with just a motion of my hand, the camera struck a joyful pose.

And just as quickly were off to new adventures.

Theme:

The co-existing of Traditional and Modern China; as a collectivist society, China is less a “this or that” but more a “this and that” social structure.

Essay: rough draft

My life in China was a time of total cultural immersion, living with my wife, who is Chinese as a partial bridge, anchor. Although we could speak in English we lived in Chinese, me a visitor, her a citizen. The experience of confusion, disorientation, arrogance, understanding, and a wider view played out over my time living there. Cultural Shock and the re-entry into my birth culture shapes and informs me and this work.

Peeling back the layers of this time abroad while relying on visual clues,



Scans from Original film, Kodak EPP

contrasted with mental images, and the photographic reality was a jarring and widening experience. Standing at the bathroom mirror, seeing my big nose and the awkwardness of my 6 feet of height and blue eyes I truly was the other in this land. I searched out that common, that point of connection, that solidity of experience and in so doing began to perceive the outlines of culture, society, and human experience.

While these are lofty words and ideas to be supported on the subtle shoulders of a simple photograph, it also reflects the give and takes of word and image, the lacking of one, and the power of the other. Just as the Chinese speak of the yin and yang, the dry and wet, the movement from the one to the other and the transcendence of duality, the image confronts us, sometimes loudly and clearly, others softly and gentle and hopefully always communicates.

I left in the Fall / Autumn traveling west to arrive in the east, the orient. From my first exposure at Narita airport in Japan after a long flight to my first border crossing from Hong Kong to mainland China, I was confronted with the new and the newly familiar. Entering the

restroom, opening the stall door only to find an oblong porcelain.... thing in the floor and thinking I had entered the woman's room by mistake, than puzzling over why this would be a woman's room to finding that comforting toilet bowl in the next stall, this was a journey.

The following morning having Dim Sum in Hong Kong with the Aunties and Uncles and the older gentleman at the next table who gently removed the paper covering of the chop sticks, rolled it into a ball with his nimble fingers, tossed it on the table and expertly picked it up with the chop sticks. Than motioning me to try as the others watched with smile, talking amongst themselves at each attempt I made to pick it up and their joy and good cheer at my mastery of the chop sticks.

To experience Dim Sum, the noise, smells, loud conversation and all that it is is to experience the culture of southern China where ever that may be. It is said a traditional Cantonese greeting is "Have you eaten?" and that when visiting one always brings some food, fruit. It is also said "the Cantonese will eat anything on four legs including the kitchen table". These simple acts hold shape and focus as is seen in the daily market where the men and women take time to select the best in fresh food. Why live chickens and fowl at the wet markets, in a semi-tropical environment, with little modern refrigeration? When that clucking chicken I choose shortly becomes a cleaned, plucked, bird with head and feet I bring home for the evening meal, I know it is fresh and healthy. Simple!

Pollution; having grown up in the CT river valley in western Massachusetts, the warm summer days are deeply etched in my mind and memory. The broad fluffy white clouds and sparkling blue skies, warm river waters we swam in, fresh mowed grass smell and all the wonders of childhood. I caught glimpses of those perfect days in Shenzhen, China, although slightly hotter, which my wife lamented were fewer over the ten years she had lived there. China was not moving, not marching not even running but seemingly hurdling into

modernity. It was said from 70 to 80% of the worlds construction cranes were on lease to China and that with this massive building the earth, the good earth, lost it's vegetation and cover as happens in any building project and simply blow and drifted into the air.

With the 3 gorges dam the Chinese had taken on the largest civil engineering project the world has seen, not since the Hoover Dam has man tamed nature for his service on such a scale. While on a bus tour for International Woman's day we were brought up a long winding road to over look the sea. Below was a brand new sprawling nuclear plant with meticulous plants and foliage and design. This was part of a day which included a trip to a wonderful beach and excellent hosted lunch to a stop at a beautiful Oceanside resort, great shopping market and a Jade market which was put on by the "3 ladies" as we referred to them who owned a dance club and one of who was a member of the Chinese Woman's Olympic Basketball team.

This and That.

